Proposal for funding – Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP)

1.70 Component B – Partnership objectives

1.70.1 The objectives of the Partnership Component of the HEPPP are to increase the total number of people from low SES backgrounds who access and participate in higher education through effective outreach and related activities with appropriate stakeholders including, but not limited to, schools, State/Territory Governments, VET providers and community groups. Partnership activities for prospective domestic undergraduate students from low SES backgrounds may:

(a) assist in improving the understanding and awareness of higher education as a viable post-school option;

(b) assist in pre-tertiary achievement, either at school or via an alternative pathway, to enable consideration for access to higher education;

(c) encourage an increase in the proportion of such people who apply for attendance at a provider; and

(d) support such people in linking with higher education providers.

1.70.5 Partnership activities undertaken by the provider are intended to:

(a) support collaboration between providers to ensure a coordinated approach to identifying and engaging with appropriate stakeholders including, but not limited to, schools, State/Territory Governments, VET providers and community groups to encourage the participation of prospective domestic undergraduate students from low SES backgrounds in higher education; and

(b) concentrate resources to most effectively target low SES communities where aspirations to enter higher education are low and where matriculation to universities is poor.

Background

The AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program

The AVID program has as its aim ‘closing the achievement gap’ for those students from groups traditionally under-represented in tertiary education. This aligns it very well with the aims of the HEPPP as listed above.

AVID is a systemic, highly effective program that prepares students in years 6–12 to enter tertiary education at the end of their high school studies. Most students who enrol in AVID are from low socio-economic backgrounds. Students are targeted during the middle years by teachers in the participating school, and are systemically supported throughout high school to gain entry into university.

Students who participate in AVID are placed in the most rigorous courses the middle school or high school offers. The program provides the students with tutors to help them through challenging coursework. Tutors are trained in the AVID curriculum, which is designed to offer academic assistance needed for success in these classes. The program also provides professional development to existing teachers, leaders and counsellors at their school.
AVID commenced operating in the USA in 1980. It now involves approximately 320,000 students in 4,000 schools across 16 countries. Funds in the US model are derived at the school and state level, and there is also philanthropic support from a range of companies, foundations and individuals.

In the USA the program has had demonstrable success. In 2009 nearly 70% of Hispanic or African American learners, more than 15% of learners from non-English backgrounds, and more than 60% of learners from low income backgrounds were offered tertiary places.

Many universities actively work to support AVID programs by offering scholarships for AVID students, recruiting university students to serve as tutors in AVID classrooms, and opening up their campuses through university tours and other outreach events. In turn, AVID helps participating universities to diversify their student body while increasing high academic standards.

The AVID program has now made a promising start in Australia.

**AVID in Australia**

Since last year an AVID program has been operating at Wodonga, where it has involved Wodonga Middle Years College and the Murray School of Education at Charles Sturt University.

The program at the college is supported by the Murray School of Education, Thurgoona campus of Charles Sturt University, which has created an active partnership with the AVID organisation. Each year the university provides the college with five pre-service teachers, enrolled in the Bachelor of Education (K–12 Middle Schooling), who work as tutors to assist participating students.

These tutors run two classes a week, using the AVID curriculum to unlock the content of the demanding courses in which they are enrolled. WICR (Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, and Reading) strategies form the basis of the curriculum. These strategies include: effective note taking; literacy support for rigorous coursework; essay writing skills; organisation and time management support; university and career preparatory work; and other strategies for
academic achievement. The tutors also act as role models for young people in the AVID program.

**Charles Sturt University connection**

The Murray School of Education has embedded AVID tutoring experience in its subject EED314 Schools, Communities and Learners in order to enhance pre-service teachers’ understandings of both strong pedagogy, and social justice and equity issues.

The five pre-service teachers also travel to the USA to participate in a five day Summer Institute. The AVID Summer Institutes in the USA provide professional development for teams of secondary school teachers and their feeder middle school teachers from schools where AVID is being implemented. The Institutes also train school counsellors and administrators in the program's methodologies.

Attending the Institute provides an opportunity for pre-service teachers to improve their teaching strategies as well as to work alongside current teachers. They also gain the opportunity to network with colleagues in another country and develop an international perspective on issues in teaching.

Other important elements of the AVID program are its support for leadership development, and engagement with the community and with students’ families. Leadership development is explored in numerous capacities. For example, leaders from the local community are brought into the AVID classroom as guest speakers; these include university lecturers and students, business leaders, and community leaders. Students can practice taking effective notes while they learn about leadership and university success from members of the community. Guest speakers offer an important link between AVID students, the outside community and their thinking about leadership. Community service offers another opportunity to develop AVID student leadership capabilities.

Many AVID students are the first members of their family to attend university upon completion of their high school studies. As such, family outreach is an essential component to the AVID curriculum. Annually, AVID programs invite AVID families to back-to-school nights, end-of-the-year banquets, or to other AVID university information events. These programs support parents in understanding AVID, university entrance requirements and scholarship information. They are also designed to celebrate AVID students’ success.

**Growth of AVID program in Australia**

AVID Australia commenced in 2009 in WMYC with one year 9 class of 20 students. In 2010 that increased to two year 9 classes of 35 total students and two year 8 classes with 50 total students. For next year, 87 students from year 7 and of low SES background, including some from an Indigenous background, have applied to be accepted into the program in year 8. It is planned to extend the program to at least one year 7 class.
Proposal for funding under the HEPPP initiative

One of the features of the AVID program in the USA, and a key to its success, is the use of paid university-based tutors in each AVID class. At present in Australia, pre-service teachers from the Murray School of Education are volunteering hours to work in the classroom, assisting the students and improving their own experience and skills. However, as pre-service teachers generally must also find paid work to support their studies, it has been difficult to maintain a core group of trained and experienced tutors in the AVID classes.

The Murray School of Education would like to propose that

a) the HEPPP funds provide training for the pre-service teachers working as tutors in the AVID program; and

b) the HEPPP provide funds to pay the wages of pre-service teachers who are providing tutoring in the AVID classes being held at Wodonga Middle Years College; and

c) the HEPPP fund AVID community awareness sessions to be held on the Thurgoona campus of CSU in order to link parents, other members of the community (including Indigenous Elders), and educators at the primary, secondary and tertiary level.

Benefits

1) Enhanced relationships between pre-service teachers and AVID students, with concomitant benefits for both the students’ and the pre-service teachers’ learning and personal development.

2) Continuity of training and experience for pre-service teachers in the AVID programs.

3) Strong connection between Charles Sturt University and students from low SES backgrounds and groups traditionally under-represented in tertiary level education.

4) The possibility for CSU pre-service teachers to gain paid employment working in their chosen profession.

5) Certification for the AVID program at WMYC, with concomitant long term benefits for students from groups traditionally under-represented in tertiary education.

6) Stronger community awareness of the AVID program and its potential to ‘close the achievement gap’ for students from groups under-represented at tertiary level.

Costs

a) The MSE proposes that a suitable AVID educator such as Dr William DeJean from Macquarie University be paid to provide a day’s training in AVID strategies to all third year Middle School students. This will provide them with the skills to work as tutors in the classroom.

Cost: $650.00 training fee plus $220.00 airfare (Sydney to Albury return) = $870.00

b) Wages for pre-service teachers as tutors in the AVID program, WMYC.

Student (pre-service teacher) rate per hour: $25.14 plus 6.65% oncosts
Number of AVID classes per year: 8 per week x 40 (10 weeks per term) = 320
Tutors per AVID class: 3
Total hours wages: 960 @ $26.81 = $25,737.60
c) Community awareness sessions: proposed February and midyear.
   Approximate cost per session (food, room, advertising): $2,000.00 x 2 = $4,000.00